

Martha J. Wolf House
1009 Chestnut Avenue
First Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5808

HABS
PA,
7-ALTO,
37-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MARTHA J. WOLF HOUSE

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Location: 1009 Chestnut Avenue

Date of Erection: 1889

Description: This greenstone-fronted building is one of the most unusual in the First Ward. The structure is wood frame and veneered with brick on all but the front facade; the front is faced with ornamental rough-faced, random-course, ashlar greenstone and brownstone. The flat roof--also a rarity for a house in Altoona--is defined by a metal cornice. There is a metal oriel projecting from the second story. The round-arched window on the first floor contains stained glass.

History: This building is associated with the W. H. & L. C. Wolfe Co., which started in the grocery business in 1888 next door at No. 1011. In 1898 they were advertised as "cigar manufacturers and bicycle dealers," and in 1900 as "dealers in bicycles, tires, sundries, guns, ammunition, general sporting goods and cigar manufacturers." In 1905, they opened the first Buick dealership in Altoona, which by 1945 was the oldest Buick dealership in the world, according to company publicity.

This house was built about 1889, when the assessed value of this property rose from \$2,000 to \$4,000. John P. Wolf acquired the property in 1870; after his death, his widow Martha ran a grocery store, probably next door at No. 1011. Martha Wolf built the house, or altered one on the site, and shared it with her sons William H. Wolfe (1866-1938) and Lewis C. Wolfe (1868-?1945). In 1900, Georgiana Thompson ran a boarding house here; one of her boarders was Lewis C. Wolfe. Other occupants included her daughter, Linda, 22; boarders Charles Halunlick, a bookkeeper, draughtsman Edwin Treas, patternmaker Jesse Garrison, druggist William Davis, bicycle repairer Vance Evans, and machinist Edward Williams; and a servant, Catherine Apple, and her 2-year-old daughter. The Wolfe family owned the building until 1948.

Sources: Maps: 1888, 1894. City directories. Tax assessment records. Deed books: 31/86, 31/87, 83/260, 355/14, 355/17, 583/5. U. S. Census, 1870, 1880, 1900. Wolf, 502.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. An overview of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and an overview of the first ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5788) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by HABS Senior Historian Alison K. Hoagland, project leader and editor, in the summer of 1989. Hoagland's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.